THE NAMING COMMISSION RECOMMENDS

Fort Barfoot

As the new name for Fort Pickett, Virginia

Like approximately fifteen million of his fellow Americans, **Van T. Barfoot** answered the call for national service during World War II. He started his service earlier than many, enlisting into the Army in 1940 as the nation warily mobilized in response to war in Europe and Asia. Barfoot watched with his fellow Americans as the war intensified, and he shipped out with his fellow soldiers after the attack at Pearl Harbor. He fought with great valor, evincing tactical skill, commitment to his mission, and dedication to his men.

These qualities became evident by his actions on 23 May 1944. As a technical sergeant in Central Italy, Barfoot and his unit were assaulting well-entrenched German forces. When they came under attack from machine gun positions in the foothills of the Apennine Mountains, Barfoot moved out alone, heading for the enemy flank. Crawling to the edge of the first machine gun emplacement, Barfoot threw a grenade that killed two and wounded three of the crew, disabling the position. Securing the three prisoners, Barfoot advanced on a second machine gun nest which he attacked with tommy-gun fire, killing two more enemy soldiers and taking another three prisoner. Continuing his solitary assault, Barfoot encountered a third machine gun emplacement and compelled the crew to surrender. Having turned the tide in the area, he continued to "mop up" the remaining enemy positions, ultimately taking seventeen prisoners while consolidating the newly won position.

But Barfoot's day was only half over. Later in the afternoon the Germans counterattacked, with three tanks leading their charge. Now leading a small squad defending the ground gained, Barfoot acquired a bazooka and again moved out ahead of his men, facing the tanks alone. He fired on the lead tank, disabling it and causing the other two to turn away. When the crew exited the stopped vehicle, Barfoot attacked, killing three. With the counterattack reversed, Barfoot then proceeded further into enemy territory. Finding a field artillery piece that had been temporarily abandoned, he destroyed it by placing and detonating an explosive charge in its barrel. Finally withdrawing from these varied fights to the safety of his lines, then-Tech. Sgt. Barfoot discovered two grievously wounded American soldiers unable to evacuate by themselves. Risking his safety once again, he supported both as they moved almost a mile across exposed grounds, leading them to treatment and, in all likelihood, saving their lives.

Any single one of these actions could merit a high award for valor. And every one of them was carried out with

the utmost dedication to the success of his mission and the safety of his soldiers. Similarly, when notified that he had received the Medal of Honor for his actions, Barfoot chose to have his ceremony conducted in the field with his unit.

Just as he entered the service earlier than many, he also stayed longer than most: Barfoot served for a total of 34 years, including tours in Korea and Vietnam. He also served as Senior Army Advisor to the Virginia National Guard, and he retired in Virginia as a colonel. Barfoot's pride in service continued throughout his life; in 2009 he made national news at the age of 90 when he insisted on flying the American flag at his home, against the wishes of his local homeowners association.

As his Medal of Honor citation rightly articulates, Barfoot's "herculean efforts," "extraordinary heroism," and "magnificent valor" offer "perpetual inspiration to his fellow soldiers."